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Motte Alston Read

MOTTE ALSTON READ became a member of the South Carolina Historical Society in 1909 and was chosen as a curator in 1912.

He was born June 20, 1872, and was the eldest son of William Melvin Read of Virginia by his wife Jane Ladson Alston, daughter of Mr. Jacob Motte Alston of South Carolina.

He completed his college education at Harvard University where he received the degree of Bachelor of Science in 1893. His subsequent scientific work can be best told by a quotation from the *News and Courier* (August 6, 1914) telling of his election to the chair of Biology in the College of Charleston, which the condition of his health prevented him from ever filling:

"He continued his scientific work in Munich during several years in the later nineties and in 1901 was elected to the chair of Physiography in Harvard University. In 1902 he was again in Europe, engaged in palaeontological faunal studies in the Tyrol, and returning to Harvard in the fall was elected, while still holding the Harvard Chair, to the instructorship in Physiography in Radcliffe College and in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Prof. Read was at various times vice president of the Harvard Natural History Society, a member of the Boston Natural History Society, field assistant in the United States Geological Survey, member of the International Congresses of Geologists, which met in Washington in 1891, in Russia in 1897, and in Paris in 1900. He is also a member of the German Alpine Verein, and a charter member of the Harvard Traveller's Club, devoted to furthering scientific travel. The principal subjects of his research have been palaeontology of the Amphibia and Reptilia, the geographical distribution of life and lands past and present, and eugenics. His chief publication is *Gastropods of the Volcanic Tuff of the Seisser Alp, Tirol, Triassic*."

Mr. Read was also an earnest student of history, principally in its economic and racial development. For he was a careful observer of heredity both in its narrower or personal aspect and in its broader sense, as involving the development or decay of

groups of individuals, connected by blood or descent, called loosely tribes, nations, and races.

This it was that gave the impulse to his historical studies of the older families of Virginia and the Carolinas, and led to his continued interest in this Society, and its publications. And it is a distinct loss that the increasing infirmity produced by his cruel disease prevented his completing the work he had in hand for publication in this magazine. This disease it was which in the full vigour of manhood broke off his professional career and compelled his retirement to his Texan ranch in the hope that an active out-of-door life might assist his powers of resistance. Finding this hope a vain one, he made his home in Charleston and resigned himself to the sedentary life of his library, where his mental activities in the acquirement and arrangement of knowledge continued to his death, even though his own productiveness became daily more limited by pain and loss of physical powers.

And yet visits to this library were constant pleasures to his friends, for they found in it a fortitude which allowed no place to regrets for lost opportunities and no complaints over present disabilities. But in place of these they met an active interest in current events, a keen intelligence, a superb memory, and a readiness to discuss the great movements of the intellectual world whether in science, in history, or in art. For among his acquirements was a knowledge and developed taste in the last, which made his opinions authoritative among connoisseurs, and enabled him to form for his own pleasure a fine collection of Japanese Color Prints.

He died at his residence No. 8 Atlantic Street on July 12, 1920.

D. E. HUGER SMITH.

